

## CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS.....	19
<b>1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>1.1 Tissue Engineering.....</b>	<b>23</b>
1.1.1 Bone tissue regeneration.....	24
<b>1.2 Aliphatic polyesters.....</b>	<b>27</b>
1.2.1 PCL: Poly( $\epsilon$ -caprolactone) .....	28
1.2.2 PLA: Poly(lactic acid) .....	29
1.2.3 PCL/PLA copolymers.....	31
1.2.4 PGA: Polyglycolic acid.....	31
1.2.5 PHAs: Polyhydroxyalkanoates (PHB, PHBV, P4HB, PHBHHx, PHO) .....	32
<b>1.3 Biodegradation of aliphatic polyesters.....</b>	<b>33</b>
1.3.1 Biodegradation process for aliphatic polyesters [71] .....	33
1.3.2 Biodegradation rate of PCL, PLA and PGA.....	35
1.3.3 Inflammatory response of polyesters.....	37
<b>1.4 Polymethacrylates .....</b>	<b>39</b>
1.4.1 Inflammatory response of polymethacrylates .....	39
<b>1.5 Bioactive composites .....</b>	<b>40</b>
1.5.1 Hydroxyapatite (HA) .....	40
1.5.2 Halloysite nanotubes (HNTs).....	43
1.5.3 Curcumin.....	45
<b>2 OBJECTIVES.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>3 EXPERIMENTAL SECTION .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>3.1 First chapter – Study of the improvement of PCL thermal and mechanical properties through the addition of HA and HNTs.....</b>	<b>53</b>
3.1.1 Preparation of the PCL-based hybrids .....	53
3.1.2 Thermal characterization .....	55
3.1.3 Mechanical characterization .....	58
3.1.4 Optimization of the HNTs loading with curcumin.....	59
3.1.5 Curcumin delivery rate.....	61

<b>3.2 Second chapter - Study of the influence of the addition of HA and HNTs on the morphological properties of PCL- and PHEMA-based polymers .....</b>	<b>62</b>
3.2.1 PCL/PLA-based hybrid samples.....	62
3.2.2 PHEMA and P(HEMA-co-EMA)-based hybrids .....	63
3.2.3 Structural properties .....	64
3.2.4 Hydroxyapatite nucleation .....	65
3.2.5 Degradation of PCL and PCL/PLA based hybrids.....	66
<b>3.3 Third chapter - Influence of the hydrophobic–hydrophilic nature of PCL- and PHEMA-based polymers and their nanocomposites on their <i>in vitro</i> biological development.....</b>	<b>66</b>
3.3.1 Contact Angle Measurements .....	68
3.3.2 Cell Viability and Morphology .....	69
3.3.3 Organization of Cell Cytoskeleton .....	71
<b>4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>4.1 First chapter – Study of the improvement of PCL thermal and mechanical properties through the addition of HA and HNTs.....</b>	<b>75</b>
4.1.1 Thermal characterization .....	75
4.1.2 Mechanical characterization .....	80
4.1.3 General observations: Improvement of PCL mechanical properties with HA and HNTs	89
4.1.4 Optimization of the HNTs loading with curcumin.....	91
4.1.5 Curcumin delivery rate.....	96
4.1.6 General Observations: Loading HNTs with curcumin and delivery rate.....	97
<b>4.2 Second chapter - Study of the influence of the addition of HA and HNTs on the morphological properties of PCL- and PHEMA-based polymers .....</b>	<b>99</b>
4.2.1 Structural properties .....	99
4.2.2 Hydroxyapatite nucleation .....	101
4.2.3 Degradation of PCL and PCL/PLA based hybrids.....	111
4.2.4 General observations: Influence of the addition of HA and HNTs on the morphological properties of PCL- and PHEMA-based polymers .....	114
<b>4.3 Third chapter - Influence of the hydrophobic–hydrophilic nature of PCL- and PHEMA-based polymers and their nanocomposites on their <i>in vitro</i> biological development.....</b>	<b>115</b>
4.3.1 Contact Angle Measurements .....	115
4.3.2 Cell Viability and Morphology .....	116
4.3.3 Organization of Cell Cytoskeleton .....	120

4.3.4 General observations for cell interaction influenced by the hydrophobic–hydrophilic nature .....	124
<b>5 CONCLUSIONS.....</b>	<b>131</b>
5.1 First chapter – Study of the improvement of PCL thermal and mechanical properties through the addition of HA and HNTs.....	133
5.2 Second chapter - Study of the influence of the addition of HA and HNTs on the morphological properties of PCL- and PHEMA-based polymers .....	134
5.3 Third chapter - Influence of the hydrophobic–hydrophilic nature of PCL- and PHEMA-based polymers and their nanocomposites on their <i>in vitro</i> biological development.....	135
<b>6 LIST OF CONTRIBUTIONS.....</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>7 FIGURE CAPTIONS .....</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>8 TABLE CAPTIONS.....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>9 REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>149</b>